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ABSTRACT

This is a report of a follow-up study of an elementary education student teaching program carried out in 1961-64. The intent of the program was to foster more experimental and analytic attitudes toward teaching rather than postponing a concern for research until graduate study. The follow-up study was an attempt to ascertain to what extent three groups (experimental, control, experimental-control) are essentially different after 15 years. The study involved a questionnaire sent to all participants of the three groups that could be located. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses on how the participants feel their student teaching program has contributed to their career. The findings indicate that some members of the experimental group feel somewhat stronger than the others that their student teaching experience has contributed to their involvement in graduate programs and research/evaluation activities. However, the vast array of variables negates any definable cause-effect relationship. (MM)

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"A Research Oriented Elementary Education Student Teaching Program": A Follow-Up Study

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Introduction

"A Research Oriented Elementary Education Student Teaching Program" was a Cooperative Research Project (No. 1091) of the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare carried out at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The final report on the project was published in 1965.[1] The principal investigator, James B. Macdonald, Professor in the School of Education, noted in the proposal that the sparsity of, and need for, research in teacher education was a "major motivating condition" for proposing the project. It is in the spirit of the continuing need for research in teacher education--particularly the need for longitudinal and follow-up studies--that the study reported here was proposed.

The "Research Oriented Elementary Student Teaching Program" was basically carried out from 1961-1964. The major hypothesis of the study dealt with the observable effects of a research-oriented, student-teaching experience on the improvement of decision-making and problem solving behavior in teaching. The intent was to foster more experimental

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[1] James B. Macdonald, et al. A Research Oriented Elementary Education Student Teaching Program, Cooperative Research Project No. 1091. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: School of Education, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1965.

and analytic attitudes toward teaching, rather than the typical postponement of a concern for research until graduate study. Two basic assumptions were identified:

1. "a systematic logical, reflective approach to decision-making is extremely important to effective teaching"
2. "the student teaching experience represents a critical ingredient in the pre-service preparation of teachers"

George Denemark, Dean of the School of Education at UWM at the time, stated that "A central motivation for the study was the interest of many in the importance of a research or experimental approach to teaching." (Some of us are old enough to recall the heyday of "action" or "practical" research.) Dean Denemark continued:

> ". . . what might be done to foster more experimental and analytic attitudes toward teaching. Rather than postponing the concern for research to graduate study, as is true of most programs, it was felt that such an emphasis should be considered for introduction in the undergraduate program."

(Incidentally, Leonard Kaplan[2] comments in the Spring 1976 issue of the Journal of Teacher Education that "undergraduates preparing to be teachers should have some acquaintanceship with the field of research.")

The design for the Cooperative Research Project was described as follows:

> Two groups of above-average students were selected from the total population of elementary education student teachers at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in two successive years. Each student was then randomly assigned to one of three subgroups: the experimental, which received a modified program and research

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[2]Leonard Kaplan. "Survival Talk for Educators - The Teacher as Researcher." Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 67-68.

> experiences in student teaching; the experimental-control, which received a modified program only and the control, which experienced no modifications in program. Measures of knowledge, attitudes, values, ability, personality and performance relevant to teaching and to other more general areas were collected during the semester for all groups, and three interviews were given concerning problems in student teaching. Follow-up performance ratings and interviews were conducted at the end of the first year of teaching. There was a total of sixty-six subjects: twenty-two in each of three groups during two successive years of student teaching, and forty in the combined group available for the follow-up study.

In summary, then, the basic intent of Project No. 1091 was to foster more experimental and analytic attitudes toward teaching. The results of the study including a follow-up after one year indicated very little difference when comparing the three groups - with a serious question raised as to the actual value of student teaching as an experience.[3] The question which this follow-up study raises is whether there are any "differences" after some 15 years.

Methodology:

The 1976 follow-up study was proposed with some misgiving. In the first place, it is some 15 years later. And, as indicated, Macdonald and Zaret in a report on the project which included a follow-up after one year reported essentially no significant findings except to raise the question as to whether the whole business of student teaching was actually a "benefit or burden." More misgivings were engendered as we discussed/suggested the proposal to some of our colleagues. The general reaction was, "Why the hell would you want to do that?"

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[3] James B. Macdonald and Esther Zaret. "Student Teaching: Benefit or Burden?" The Journal of Teacher Education. Vol. XXII, Number 1, Spring 1971, pp. 51-58.

Perhaps we should state at the outset the motivation to carry out the study was not to be critical of the original project or the participants. The main reasons might best be described as cussedness and curiosity. First, if there were adequate reasons for the project in the first place, it should be worth a follow-up. Second, curiosity was aroused by an anecdote of Professor William Wattenberg's concerning a study in the counseling field. In this study, Professor Wattenberg noted that while there was seemingly no difference one year after the treatment, a follow-up study after some ten years seemed to indicate that the treatment had indeed seemed to serve as a turning point in the lives of the participants. So--a follow-up study of Cooperative Research Project 1091.

The 1976 follow-up study entailed a mailed questionnaire to the sixty-six participants in the project. (A structured interview with a number of the participants was planned if it was deemed desirable and feasible. It was neither.) The major part of the questionnaire was designed to elicit how the participants feel their student teaching program has contributed to their career. Specifically, the respondents were asked to indicate on a five point scale from "very little" to "very much" the extent they feel their student teaching experience has been responsible for their:

-present position,

-enrollment in a graduate program,

-involvement in inservice programs,

-membership and involvement in professional organization,

-participation in community activities,

-reading of professional journals and publications,

-participation in research or evaluation projects.

From the investigators' understanding of the purposes and intent of the project it was felt that there might/should be a "difference" on the part of the experimental group in all or some of these activities.

Another part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate on a five point scale the extent they feel thirteen different classifications of experience have influenced their ideas about education and schooling. They were also asked to indicate five of the classifications which have had the most influence. Other parts of the questionnaire included an indication of how they feel their educational philosophy has changed, how their feelings about their student teaching experience has changed, and whether they had the feeling they were involved in a "special" program.

Results and Discussion:

Questionnaires were sent to 56 of the 66 participants in the original project. (The other 10 could not be located in the time available.) Completed questionnaires were received from 34. Table 1 indicates the number of responses by group and sex.

Table 1: Responses by group and sex

	Female	Male	Total
Experimental	9	4	13
Experimental-Control	9	2	11
Control	4	6	10
	22	12	34

In regard to location, nine of the respondents live out of the State of Wisconsin. Four of the 34 respondents live in Milwaukee while 16 live in suburbs of Milwaukee. The other five live in Wisconsin communities outside the metropolitan Milwaukee area.

The present occupation of the respondents is indicated in Table 2. There is a great deal of similarity across groups. Approximately one-half of each group has continued in teaching while approximately the same number of each group has moved into some other educational position--or indicated she is a housewife. Only three have entered fields outside of education. The other educational positions include principal, assistant principal, school psychologist, director of elementary education and university professor.

Table 2: Present Occupation

	Teacher	Adm. or other Ed. Positions	Housewife	Other (not in Ed.)	Total
Experimental	6	4	2	1	13
Experimental-Control	5	2	3	1	11
Control	5	2	2	1	10
	16	8	7	3	34

The respondents were asked to indicate on a 5 point scale (very little - 1, very much - 5) whether they felt they were involved in a "special" student teaching program.

Table 3: Feeling of Involvement in a "special" Program

Experimental			Control			Experimental-Control		
M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range
3.82	1.19	1-5	2.1	1.9	1-5	3.00	1.67	1-5

There is a significant difference between the Experimental and Control group. That is, the Experimental Group do/did feel they were in a special program. The Hawthorne Effect? However, an interesting comment from one member of the Control group indicated that the "regular" program she experienced was substantially different from the elementary teacher education programs experienced by teachers she has worked with who attended other institutions.

In conjunction with the findings of Macdonald and Zaret--"Student Teaching--Benefit or Burden"--the participants were asked to reflect on their general feeling about their student teaching experiences right after they had completed it and their present feeling about them. (Scale: Negative - 1, Positive - 5.)

Table 4: Feelings About Student Teaching Experiences

	Experimental			Control			Experimental-Control		
	M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range
RIGHT AFTER	2.82*	1.47	1-5	4.3*	.78	3-5	3.91*	1.08	2-5
NOW	3.36	1.23	1-5	4.0	.77	3-5	3.73	1.54	1-5

There is a significant difference among groups in respect to "right after" with the Control groups and the Experimental-Control group having the highest mean scores. That is the Control and Experimental-Control felt better about

their student teaching experiences "right after." The same pattern holds for "now" although the differences are not statistically significant. Whether this reflects on the nature of the Experimental program, the personalities of instructors, or a multitude of other factors raises some interesting questions. Those professors who were actually involved in the program might have some conjectures.

The investigators were also interested in whether the participants felt their educational philosophy changed in conjunction with their student teaching and has changed since then. They were asked to try to assess their "philosophy" on a 5 point scale (conservative - 1, liberal - 5). Results are indicated in Table 5. Again, the results do not indicate any consistent patterns across groups. However, logic and some other studies would seem to indicate that teachers do tend to become more "conservative" as they experience teaching. It is interesting to note, however, that the Experimental group were slightly more conservative than the other groups in all instances.

Table 5: Educational Philosophy

	Experimental			Control			Experimental-Control		
	M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range
PRIOR TO STUDENT TEACHING	3.25	1.36	1-5	3.80	.75	3-5	3.44	.95	2-5
AFTER STUDENT TEACHING	2.42	1.04	1-4	3.30	1.01	2-5	3.22	1.13	2-5
AFTER FIRST YEAR	3.00	1.00	1-5	3.30	1.19	2-5	3.56	1.17	2-5
NOW	2.73	.96	2-5	3.40	1.20	1-5	3.33	1.33	1-5

The respondents were asked to indicate on a 5 point scale how they feel their student teaching program contributed to their involvement in several categories of professional activities (Scale: very little - 1, very much - 5). This is the most critical question in terms of the impact of the project on the participants. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Student Teaching and Professional Activities

	EXPERIMENTAL			CONTROL			EXPERIMENTAL-CONTROL		
	Mean	S.D.	Range	Mean	S.D.	Range	Mean	S.D.	Range
PRESENT OCCUPATION	3.18	1.33	1-5	3.04	1.41	1-5	2.18	1.64	1-5
GRADUATE WORK	3.71*	.88	2-5	3.00*	.53	2-4	2.10*	1.69	1-5
INSERVICE	1.38	.70	1-3	1.60	.80	1-3	2.00	1.53	1-5
PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	1.83	1.21	1-4	1.88	1.27	1-5	1.89	1.37	1-5
COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES	1.78	1.31	1-5	1.33	.47	1-2	3.40	1.36	1-5
PROFESSIONAL READING	2.60	1.28	1-5	2.86	1.46	1-5	2.50	1.73	1-5
RESEARCH/EVALUATION	3.25	1.48	1-5	2.80	1.17	1-4	3.00	1.41	1-4

An analysis of variance comparison of means across groups indicates that there is a significant difference for the category concerning involvement in graduate work and programs. That is, the Experimental group tends to feel that their student teaching experience contributed more toward their involvement in graduate programs. A corollary is that the members of the Experimental group have had more involvement in graduate work and programs.

While not statistically significant, there is an interesting difference between the Experimental group and the other groups in relation to involvement in research/evaluation activities. That is, members of the Experimental group do seem to feel their student teaching experience contributed more toward their involvement in research/evaluation activities. It should also be noted that the involvement in graduate programs and research/evaluation activities are related.

The range of responses (from very little to very much) is of some interest. For example, it is interesting to note the many instances where the full range was used.

In summary of this part of the study there is some indication that the members of the Experimental group feel somewhat stronger that their student teaching experience has contributed to their involvement in graduate programs and research/evaluation activities. While the investigators are well aware of the danger of implying cause-effect relationships in such instances, those involved in the original proposal might be forgiven if they make some claim for positive results of their efforts.

On another part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate on a 5 point scale the extent they feel twelve different classifications of experience have influenced their ideas about education and schooling. (Scale: very little - 1, very much - 5) The results are indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Influences on Ideas About Education and Schooling

	Experimental			Control			Experimental-Control		
	M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range	M	S.D.	Range
1. Student Teaching Experience	3.17	1.07	1-5	3.30	.78	2-4	3.45	1.37	1-5
2. Reports of Educational Research	2.42*	.84	2-4	3.00	1.00	1-5	3.55*	1.08	2-5
3. Teaching Experience	4.92	.28	4-5	5.00	.00	5-5	4.36	1.23	1-5
4. Graduate Courses	3.30	1.35	1-5	3.40	1.20	1-5	2.90	1.30	1-4
5. Participation in Professional Organizations	2.80	1.33	1-5	2.40	1.02	1-5	1.80	1.07	1-4
6. Opinions, Behavior of Students	3.83	.99	2-5	4.10	.70	3-5	4.09	1.16	2-5
7. Professional Literature	2.92	.95	1-4	2.70	1.35	1-5	3.00	1.28	1-5
8. Administrators/Supervisors	2.50	1.26	1-5	3.00	1.09	1-4	3.00	1.35	1-5
9. Curriculum Guides	2.33	.94	1-4	2.10	.83	1-4	2.82	1.19	1-5
10. Textbooks	2.58	1.26	1-5	2.40	.92	1-4	1.91	.99	1-4
11. Fellow Teachers	3.33	.85	2-5	3.40	1.02	2-5	2.91	1.31	1-5
12. Parent/Community Association	3.33	1.25	1-5	2.40	.84	1-4	2.27	1.54	1-5

The results do not indicate any appreciable or consistent variation among the goups and caution should be exercised in their use. However, in terms of the intent of the project it is interesting to note that the mean score of the Experimental group was lowest in regard to "reports of educational research." The rank order of the "influences" was of particular interest to the investigators. This tended to be consistent across groups. There is no doubt that the teacher's own "teaching experience" and "opinions, behaviors of students" are viewed as the primary influences. However, it is interesting to note that next in order for the Experimental group are "Fellow Teachers," "Parent Community Association" and "Graduate Courses," and "Student Teaching Experiences." For the Experimental-Control group they are "Reports of Education Research" and "Student Teaching Experience." The respondents were provided the opportunity to add other classifications and several did add "family" or "my own children" as an influence on their ideas about education and schooling. (Yes, critic--this should have been included in the list provided.) One might make some interesting comments and pose some intriguing questions about these figures--but on the other hand, one might not.

As a parting question, the respondents were asked to add any general comments they cared to make. While no formal analysis has been made of the many comments, the following were chosen as representative of the flavor and content:

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

> It has been a long time but I do have pleasant memories of student teaching and the professors involved.
>
> Evaluate strengths, effectiveness, "normalcy" of cooperating teachers.

The "brilliant" programs just do not have any relation to the real world of teaching. . .

Teachers that are successful are that way in spite of training.

I'm sure each of us was very aware of the program. At the end of the year testing we knew what attitudes, knowledge, etc. were expected of us and we dutifully gave that information.

Your studies are trying to pin down intangibles. To try to measure happiness, growth, spiritual development is a bit much.

I did not enjoy the student teaching that was a part of the project. I think the 2 quarters I spent in "regular" classroom situations were of more use to me.

I have always felt that my student teaching experiences were terrific.

I don't think that my student teaching experience prepared me for the practical day-to-day teaching procedures, methods, and problems of running my own classroom. However, it did make me a more liberal, creative, and imaginative thinker which is more important in the long run.

. . . The liberal atmosphere of the campus school and the research orientation certainly motivated me to continue asking questions and seeking solutions.

My answers to the above questions may reflect that I don't value my student teacher experience. On the contrary, I found that it was most helpful in my first year of teaching. At this point my teaching is based on what I have learned since my student days. Hopefully, all teachers would use the student teaching experience only as a foundation, and build upon it with the reality of day-to-day classroom events, and current knowledge of education.

I think it is very presumptious on your part to expect comments after 15 years of silence. . .

CONTROL GROUP

I think more time (effort) should be spent teaching students to identify instructional needs of students--become familiar with typical curriculum.

I had great student teaching experiences and wouldn't have traded any one. . .

I felt that the two most important ingredients in my successful experience were my group leader and my cooperating teachers.

This questionnaire certainly brought back a flood of memories.

Since student teaching is the initial experience most people have in the field, it is also the most important. The tone of your whole career is set by how well you function in your first experience.

I have taught for 14½ years. The immediate effects of my student teaching have long disappeared.

EXPERIMENTAL-CONTROL

I certainly would not have wanted to begin teaching without one year of student teaching.

P.S. I think you should have sent a stamped envelope. (We did--something happened in your case. Sorry!)

I hate surveys but I know you need them for research which is just a bunch of words anyway. The more I read the angrier I got. Thank you.

I am not now interested in ever going back to teaching. Children are much more interesting to work with in non-classroom situations.

I think the UWM student teaching program is as good as any other I've heard about, and better than most because of the 4 (different) student teaching experiences.

I feel greater attention should be given to the selection of cooperating teachers. . .

My philosophy and methodology are the result of serious thought, much effort and extreme good fortune in the schools and colleagues with whom I have worked, plus, modestly speaking my own commitment and competency. What part did the student teaching experience play?--it's too hard for me to separate it from the rest.

Summary:

This is a report of a follow-up study of an elementary education student teaching program carried out in 1961-64. The intent of the U.S. Office of Education project (No. 1091) was to foster more experimental and analytic attitudes toward teaching rather than the typical postponement of a concern for research until graduate study. The follow-up study was an

attempt to ascertain to what extent three groups (experimental, control, experimental-control) are essentially different after some 15 years.

The study was carried out with a limited budget and time--$560.00 to be exact. It is recognized that a design which included interviews, observation, and testing might have been more ideal. On the other hand, perhaps the minimal design which was carried out was sufficient in terms of the purpose and findings.

The design involved a questionnaire sent to all of the participants of the three groups that could be located. Returns were received from 34 of the 56. The questionnaire was designed to elicit from the participants:

. . . whether they felt they were involved in a "special" project

. . . their general feeling about their student teaching experience

. . . changes in their educational philosophy

. . . the extent to which several classifications of experience has contributed to their ideas about education and schooling

. . . how they feel their student teaching experience contributed to their involvement in several categories of educational activities.

While the findings would seem to indicate that we are indeed the "cult of no significant difference," there are some significant differences which were identified although the vast array of variables involved negate any "neat" cause-effect relationship. On the other hand, while it may be difficult to "measure" the impact which a particular segment of one's life has had in the total scheme of things, it doesn't seem to make sense to completely disregard it--even student teaching--whether "benefit or burden."